

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior listings of claims in the application.

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1-5. (Canceled)

6. (NEW) A method of negotiation, comprising:

conducting a negotiation between two parties through a broker in a way that conceals negotiating positions of the two parties;

wherein each party receives from the broker a dictionary of words for description of the negotiating positions, and a schema for descriptive statements in the negotiating positions;

wherein the party who is asked to begin negotiation sends a one-way encryption key to the other party by a public key encryption system, said broker not possessing the one-way encryption key;

wherein each party applies the one-way encryption key to partially encrypt to their negotiating positions;

wherein each party sends its partially encrypted negotiating position to the broker via the public key encryption system;

wherein, upon receiving both partially encrypted negotiation positions, the broker compares them to discover whether there exists an encrypted statement that is compatible with both negotiating positions;

wherein the broker notifies each party about an apparent basis-for-agreement;

wherein the broker provides the parties with a copy of the encrypted basis-for-agreement;

wherein each party decodes the basis-for-agreement.

7. (NEW) A method according to Claim 6, wherein the schema uses XML, XML-DTD, or BNF Grammar.

8. (NEW) A method according to Claim 6, wherein both parties use the one-way encryption key to derive a codebook from the dictionary.

9. (NEW) A method according to Claim 6, wherein both parties never receive a full copy of the opposite party's negotiating position.

10. (NEW) A method according to Claim 6, wherein the broker allows a party to see a list of potential negotiation partners and the party has the opportunity to make a selection of acceptable negotiating partners.

11. (NEW) A method according to Claim 10, wherein each party may modify their negotiation position so that it is specific for each potential negotiating partner.

12. (NEW) A method according to Claim 6, wherein the broker retains an historical record of the negotiation.

13. (NEW) A method according to Claim 6, wherein the broker is unable to decrypt the negotiation positions or the basis-for-agreement.

14. (NEW) A method according to Claim 6, comprising concealing numerical values and value ranges in a negotiating position by linear mapping of values using a secret offset and secret scaling factor.

15. (NEW) A method according to Claim 14, comprising:
using the one-way encryption key, encrypting the name of a value set as a number with $2n$ bits,
separating high order bits from low order bits, and
converting the two numbers of n bits to an offset and scaling factor which are then applied to values in the value set.

16. (NEW) A method of negotiating between parties, comprising:
- each party enrolling with a broker, said broker having developed a vocabulary for said parties to describe goods, services information, or property to be exchanged through negotiation;
 - each party preparing a preliminary negotiating position according to vocabulary rules supplied by the broker;
 - pairing parties for negotiation, wherein each party makes a selection of acceptable negotiating partners;
 - each party sending an encrypted negotiating position to the broker using one-way encryption;
 - the broker comparing the encrypted positions and notifying each party about the extent of a potential agreement, wherein the one-way encryption prevents the broker from decoding the content of the negotiating positions;
 - wherein if the parties agree to proceed, the broker providing each party with a copy of an encrypted basis-for-agreement, each of said parties decoding the basis-for-agreement.
17. (NEW). A method according to Claim 16, further comprising developing the basis-for-agreement into a binding agreement by direct negotiation between the two parties.
18. (NEW) A method according to Claim 16, wherein the negotiating position of each party is described in standardized markup language.
19. (NEW) A method according to Claim 16, wherein one-way encryption is applied to nouns and adjectives in a negotiating position.
20. (NEW) A method according to Claim 16, wherein conjunction, verbs and prepositions are non-encrypted in a negotiating position.

21. (NEW) A method according to Claim 16, wherein the broker compares sentences in the negotiation positions without decoding encrypted elements of the sentences, thereby allowing the broker to determine if there is a basis for a negotiated contract.

22. (NEW) A method according to Claim 16, wherein the broker identifies grammatical rules for unencrypted keywords.

23. (NEW) A method according to Claim 16, wherein data to be exchanged through the negotiation comprises intelligence data, price information, or intellectual property holdings.

24. (NEW) A method according to Claim 16, wherein the negotiating is online.